

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1075

S E C R E T NEW DELHI 12097

FOLNG SENT NEW DELHI INFO BOMBAY AND MADRAS DTD 5SSEPT FROM
CALCUTTA

QUOTE: CALCUTTA 2101

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG

SUBJ: DISCORD IN THE WEST BENGAL CPM

1. THE CPM IS A MAJOR PLAYER ON THE EASTERN INDIAN SCENE, PARTICULARLY IN CALCUTTA AND WEST BENGAL. IN OUR EARLY ANALYSES OF REACTION IN THIS AREA TO THE EMERGENCY WE POINTED OUT THAT ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR THE CALM THAT HAS PREVAILED HERE WAS THAT THE CPM WAS KEEPING QUIET. IT HAS CONTINUED TO DO SO BUT THIS STANCE IS APPARENTLY CAUSING INTERNAL DISCORD. BECAUSE OF THE CPM'S IMPORTANCE IN THIS AREA WE HAVE KEPT A CLOSE WATCH ON IT. WE NOW HAVE INFORMATION ON DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE WEST BENGAL CPM WHICH WE THINK WILL BE OF INTEREST TO THE EMBASSY AND TO THOSE IN WASHINGTON WHO FOLLOW SUCH MATTERS.

2. SINCE THE IMPOSITION OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, THE CPM LEADERSHIP SEEMS TO HAVE LOST ITS WILL TO OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT AND THIS HAS HAD AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE CADRE, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION, THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP HAS INDICATED IT DOES NOT WANT A CONFRONTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND THAT IT WOULD LIKE TO COME TO AN AGREEMENT

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WITH THE CPI. THE CPM TRADE UNION CADRE REPORTEDLY DOES NOT AGREE

WITH THE LEADERSHIP'S POLICY.

3. SEP 4 JUGANTAR CARRIES UNU STORY DATELINED ASANSOL THAT RABIN CHATTERJEE, GENERAL SECRETARY OF COLLIERY MAZDOOR SABHA (CPM UNION), LEFT THE PARTY WITH ABOUT 10,000 MEMBERS OF HIS UNION (THIS FIGURE IS PROBABLY EXAGGERATED). AT A PRESS CONFERENCE CHATTERJEE ANNOUNCED THAT HENCEFORTH HE AND THE MEMBERS OF THE UNION WHO LEFT WITH HIM WILL NOT HAVE ANY CONNECTION WITH THE CPM, NOR WILL THEY HAVE ANY CONNECTION WITH THE CPM TRADE UNION CENTER, CITU. HE ADDED THAT THEY WILL NOT JOIN ANY OTHER POLITICAL PARTY. THE CPM ANNOUNCED LAST WEEK THAT THE PARTY HAD EXPELLED CHATTERJEE FOR ANTIPARTY ACTIVITIES. CHATTERJEE, A MILITANT TRADE UNION LEADER IN ASANSOL-RANIGUNGE INDUSTRIAL BELT, JOINED THE UNDIVIDED

CPI IN THE FIFTIES AFTER BREAKING AWAY FROM THE SOCIALIST PARTY. HE WAS ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR A LARGE NUMBER OF POLITIVL MURDERS (INCLUDING HIS FORMER SOCIALIST BRETHREN) IN THE 1969-71 PERIOD WHEN INTER-PARTY CLASHES WERE RAMPANT IN THE STATE.

4. WE HAVE RECEIVED OTHER REPORTS OF CPM TRADE UNION DISSATISFAC-TION WITH CPM LEADERSHIP POLICIES. THE TRADE UNIONS ARE ONE OF THE CPM'S MAIN BASTIONS OF STRENGTH AND IF THE PARTY LOSES ITS POSITION WITH THE UNIONS AND THEIR LEADERS IN WEST BENGAL IT WOULD BE INN SERIOUS TROUBLE HERE. THE GOWB IS OF COURSE WELL AWARE OF THIS AND HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN DISMISSING THE CPM LEADERSHIP OF THE POWERFUL CLERICAL UNIONS FROM TYEIR GOVERRMENT POSTS. (THE CPM'S MAJOR ORGANIZED STRENGTH IS IN THE WHITE COLLAR SECTOR.) A SENIOR PRO-CPM TRADE UNIONIST, JATIN CHAKRAVARTY (SUC/UTUC) TOLD A CONGEN POLITICAL LOCAL ON SEPTEMBER 3 THAT 10 SENIOR LEADERS OF THE COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES BELONGING TO THE CPM, WHO WERE ARRESTED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE EMERGENCY, HAVE SINCE BEEN DISMISSED FROM THEIR GOVERNMENT POSITIONS. THE CPM NEWSPAPERS HAVE ALSO CARRIED ADDITIONAL REPORTS OF THE DISMISSALS OF CPM TRADE UNION WORKERS IN DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS OF GOVERNMENT. A CPM TRADE UNION LEADER, RABIN MUKHSRJEE (SECRETARY OF THE METAL AND ENGINEERING WORKERS' FEDERATION) RECENTLY TOLD A CONGEN LOCAL THAT SINCE THE EMERGENCY A NUMBER OF GRASS ROOT WORKERS OF THE PARTY IN THE TRADE UNION FRONT INCLUDING RAILWAY EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AND SUBSEQUENTLY DISMISSED FROM THEIR JOBS.

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5. THE CPM, WHICH HAS YET TO RESETTLE A LARGE NUMBER (ESTIMATED AT OVER 2,000) OF ITS PARTY WORKERS OUSTED FROM THEIR YOMES AS A RESULT OF YOUTH CONGRESS ATTACKS SINCE SUMMER OF 1972, SEEMS UN-WILLING TO CONFRONT THE GOVERNMENT AT THIS TIME. THE PARTY DECIDED TO LIE LOW AFTER PROMULGATION OF EMERGENCY IN ORDER TO AVOID GOVERNMENTAL REPRESSION, BUT THERE HAS NONETHELESS BEEN SOME REPRESSION AND THIS IS CAUSING SERIOUS RETHINKING WITHIN THE PARTY. ONE RESULT HAS BEEN THAT SOME PARTY MEMBERS HAVE GONE

UNDERGROUND AND MANY OTHERS HAVE BECOME INACTIVE.

6. THE GOWB, NO DOUBT SENSING IT HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO UNDERMINE THE CPM MAY BE TEMPTED TO CONTINUE ITS ATTACKS ON THE CPM TRADE UNIONS SO AS TO ELIMINATE THE CPM AS A CREDITABLE FORCE IN BENGAL. IF THE GOVERNMENT PUSHES THE CPM TRADE UNIONS TOO HARD HOWEVER, THERE MAY BE AN INCREASE IN LABOR AGITATION. WE HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED INDICATIONS FROM BUSINESSMEN THAT THE UNIONS ARE CURRENTLY AGITATING BY SLOWDOWNS AND SIT-DOWN STRIKES FOR PUJA BONUSES.

7. THE CPI'S ROLE IN THIS WHOLE AFFAIR IS LESS CLEAR. WE KNOW THE CPI HAS OFFERED TO BE A BROKER BETWEEN THE CPM CENTRAL LEADERSHIP AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. ONE OF THE CPI'S GOALS CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE TO DEEPEN THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE CPM LEADERSHIP AND ITS LABOR AFFILIATES, HOPING TO GAIN BY THE DECREASE IN CPM POWERS. YET BECAUSE THE CPI IS CONSIDERABLY LESS RADICAL THAN THE CPM UNION LEADERSHIP, THERE WOULD APPEAR TO BE LITTLE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CPI TO GAIN CONTROL OF THE DISAFFECTED UNIONS. PERHAPS JUST THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP WRECK HAVOC IN THE CPM RANKS IS ENOUGH INCENTIVE FOR THE CPI TO KEEP UP ITS DIVISIVE ACTIONS.

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